

## Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

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R 300802Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4467

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0507

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR US, SN, UR

SUBJECT: SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER ON "BUYING INSURANCE"

1. 1. WHAT I CONSIDER AN INTERESTING AND RATHER SIGNIFICANT VIGNETTE ON SINGAPORE FOREIGN POLICY OCCURRED JANUARY 29 DURING AIRPORT DEPARTURE CEREMONY FOR PRESIDENT AND MRS. MARCOS. JUST AS MARCOS AIRCRAFT WERE TAXIING AWAY BUT BEFORE CEREMONY BROKE UP PM LEE KUAN YEW STROLLED OVER TO LINEUP OF FOREIGN DIPLOMATS, AND AFTER HAVING RATHER CONSPICUOUSLY CHATTED IN MALAY WITH MALAYSIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER YUSSOF, HE APPROACED MY SOVIET COLLEAGUE AND ME. I AM RANKED IMMEDIATELY AFTER AMBASSADOR RAZDUKHOV IN PROTOCOL ORDER, AND THE PM ACCORDINGLY DREW US BOTH INTO THE ENSUING CONVERSATION.

2. SPEAKING IN MANDARIN, PM LEE FIRST WISHED RAZDUKHOV A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND ME A HAPPY TWO-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE US. THEN, SWITCHING TO ENGLISH, HE TOLD US THAT HE WAS "BUYING INSURANCE" FROM BOTH OUR COUNTRIES.

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IN THE CASE OF THE SOVIET UNION, HE SAID, HE DREW ON

THE SOVIET SHIPPING COMPANY AND THE LOW PRICES IT CHARGES TO COUNTER HIGHER RATES OF THE MAJOR SHIPPING COMPANIES. (SINGAPORE AND THE USSR PARTICIPATE IN A JOINT SHIPPING COMPANY, SOSIAC, WHICH IN FACT HANDLES A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF SINGAPORE'S EXPORTS BECAUSE ITS RATES UNDERCUT THOSE OF THE PACIFIC CONFERENCE.) AS FAR AS THE US WAS CONCERNED, HE CONTINUED, "I KEEP YOU AROUND IN CASE THERE IS TROUBLE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD."

3. PM LEE'S REMARKS IN A WAY CAPSULIZE SINGAPORE POLICY TOWARD THE US AND USSR. THE SOVIETS ARE HERE, AND ARE A FACTOR IN GOS POLICY, ALBEIT A NEGATIVE FACTOR AS WE KNOW FROM THE SUSPICIONS OF SOVIET MOTIVES VOICED TO US BY VARIOUS SENIOR GOS PERSONALITIES. HOWEVER, SINCE THEY ARE INDEED HERE, THEIR PRESENCE AND LOCALLY ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS MIGHT AS WELL BE PUT TO THE GREATEST ECONOMIC USE POSSIBLE, E.G. IN HELPING TO PROVIDE THE GOS WITH ECONOMIC LEVERAGE AGAINST PRICES SET BY COMPETING FOREIGN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. AS FOR THE US, WE REMAIN A USEFUL MILITARY COUNTERWEIGHT AGAINST POSSIBLE PRESSURES FROM MAJOR EXTERNAL FORCES, INCLUDING THE USSR. INCIDENTALLY, WHILE MY SOVIET COLLEAGUE SPEAKS MANDARIN, I AM NOT SURE HOW MUCH ENGLISH HE UNDERSTANDS, AND HE MAY HAVE MISSED THE THRUST OF PM LEE'S REMARKS.  
HOLDRIDGE

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